Documentation for avoiding Plagiarism

Why does it matter?

In academics, as well as the other areas of your life, you never want to compromise your integrity. While a simple “Don’t cheat” is a good maxim to live by, plagiarism can be much stickier than that. Unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism! This handout will help you avoid making costly mistakes.

When should I acknowledge the sources I’ve used?

* Direct quotations
* Arguable statements and information that may not be common knowledge.
* The opinions and assertions of others
* Any information you didn’t generate yourself
* Collaboration with and help from others

What makes a source valid or invalid?

Use:

* Material distributed by a well-established publishing house
* Essays, abstracts, and reports appearing in well-respected periodicals and databases
* Stories from reputable news outlets (preferably the Associated Press or Reuters)
* Encyclopedias and reference sources
* Material from educational or government websites (URLs should end in .edu, .gov, or the occasional .org)

Avoid:

* Desktop publishing (blogs and personal pages – URLs often include blogspot or wordpress)
* Social networking sites (Ashton’s tweets aren’t really that authoritative)
* Wikipedia [Stop whining! I know that the website is well-monitored and often accurate. HOWEVER, it is not yet considered a reputable source of information. Use Wikipedia to gather background information on your subject, but then research elsewhere for your data and textual evidence. If you look at the bottom of most Wiki entries, there are often valid websites listed in the documentation. Click on those!)
* Study sites like SparkNotes, ENotes, and Shmoop. They’re great learning tools, but they are not reputable enough for documentation.

MLA Style

MLA stands for the Modern Language Association, the conglomeration of dudes and dudettes who set the standard for proper documentation style for English courses. Don’t challenge them or they’ll throw you into a dark pit where you will subsist only on Saltine crackers.

There are three major components of MLA style: the works cited page, in-text citations, and formatting guidelines.

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Works Cited

MLA citations are actually quite simple and efficient once you get the hang of it. The Works Cited page appears at the end of your essay – ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER – and lists comprehensive publishing information about all your sources.

The basic approach for every cited source works like this, regardless of its medium:

* author, editor, or organization providing the information
* title of work
* place of publication
* name of organization or company that published it
* date when it was published
* specify print or web source and retrieval information

Formatting your entries:

* 12 point Times or Arial font.
* Double space throughout the document.
* Center your heading; no special formatting marks.
* Use a hanging indent.
* You no longer need to cite URLs for web-based documents!
* Alphabetize your entries.
* Italicize titles of long entries; do not underline. (That was for typewriters way back when people played “Kick the Can” and drank floats at sody-fountains.)

Examples of commonly used print sources

Book with one author:

Author’s Last Name, First Name. *Title*. Publication City: Publisher, Year of

publication. Medium.

Ekirch, A. Roger. *At Day’s Close: Night in Times Past.* New York: Norton, 2005. Print.

Organization or government as author:

Organization Name. *Title*. Publication City: Year of publication. Medium.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. *The Macmillan Visual Desk Reference.* New York: Macmillan, 1993. Print.

Works in an anthology:

Author’s Last Name, First Name. “Title of Work.” *Title of Anthology.* Ed. Editor’s

First and last names. Publication City: Publisher, Year of Publication. Pages.

Medium.

Achebe, Chinua. “Uncle Ben’s Choice.” *The Seagull Reader: Literature.* Ed. Joseph

Kelly. New York: Norton, 2005. 23-27. Print.

Author and Editor:

Author’s Last Name, First Name. *Title.* Ed: Editor’s First and Last Names.

Publication City: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium.

Austen, Jane. *Emma.* Ed. Stephen M. Parrish. New York: Norton, 2000. Print.

Article in a Reference Book

Author’s Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” *Title of Reference Book.* Edition

number. Year of publication. Medium.

“Histrionics.” *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary.* 11th ed. 2003. Print.

Examples of commonly used periodical sources

Article in a journal

Author’s Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” *Title of Journal* Volume.Issue

(Year): Pages. Medium.

Cooney, Brian C. “Considering *Robinson Crusoe*’s ‘Liberty of Conscience’ in an Age of

Terror.” *College English* 69.3 (2007):197-215. Print.

Article in a magazine:

Author’s Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” *Title of Magazine* Day Month

Year: Pages. Medium.

Walsh, Bryan. “Not a Watt to be Wasted.” *Time* 17 Mar 2008: 46-47. Print.

Article in a daily newspaper:

Author’s Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” *Name of Newspaper* Day Month

Year: Pages. Medium.

Springer, Shira. “Celtics Reserves are Whizzes vs. Wizards.” *Boston Globe* 14 Mar

2005: D4+. Print.

Article in a review:

Author’s Last Name, First Name. “Title (if any) of Review.” Rev. of *Title of Work*, by Author’s First and Last Names. *Title of Periodical* Day Month Year: Pages.

Medium.

Frank, Jeffrey. “Body Count.” Rev. of *The Exception*, by Christian Jungersen. *New*

*Yorker* 30 July 2007: 86-87. Print.

Examples of commonly used web resources

Entire website

Author’s Last Name, First Name. *Title of Website*. Publisher or sponsoring

institution, Date posted or last updated. Medium. Day Month Year

of access.

Zalta, Edward N., ed. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Metaphysics Research

Lab, Center for the Study of Language and Information, Stanford U, 2007.

Web. 25 July 2008.

Personal website

Author’s Last Name, First Name. Home page. Publisher or sponsoring institution,

Date posted or last updated. Medium. Day Month Year of access.

Nunberg, Geoffrey. Home page. School of Information, U of California, Berkeley,

2009. Web. 13 Apr 2009.

Online book or part of a book:

Author’s Last Name, First Name. “Title of Short Work.” *Title of Long Work.* Original

city of publication. Original pages. *Title of Website or Database*. Medium.

Day Month Year of access.

Anderson, Sherwood. “The Philosopher.” *Winesburg, Ohio*. New York: B.W.

Huebsch, 1919. N. pag. *Bartleby.com.* Web. 7 Apr 2008

Article in an online magazine:

Author’s Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” *Title of Magazine.* Publisher,

Date of publication. Medium. Day Month Year of access.

Landsburg, Steven E. “Putting All Your Potatoes in One Basket: The Economic

Lesson of the Great Famine.” *Slate.com.* Washington Post-Newsweek

Interactive, 13 Mar 2001. Web. 15 Mar 2006.

Article accessed through an online database:

Author’s Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” *Title of Periodical* Date or

Volume.Issue (Year): Pages. *Database.* Medium. Day Month Year of access.

Ott, Brian L. “I’m Bart Simpson, Who the Hell Are You?: A Study in Postmodern

Identity (Re)Construction.” *Journal of Popular Culture* 37.1 (2003): 56-82.

*Academic Search Complete*. Web. 24 Mar 2008.

Podcast

Performer or Host’s Last Name, First Name. “Title of Podcast.” Host Host’s First

and Last Name. *Title of Program*. Sponsoring Institution, Day Month Year

posted. Medium. Day Month Year of access.

Blumberg, Alex, and Adam Davidson. “The Giant Pool of Money.” Host Ira Glass.

*This American Life*. Chicago Public Radio, 9 May 2008. Web. 18 Sept 2008.

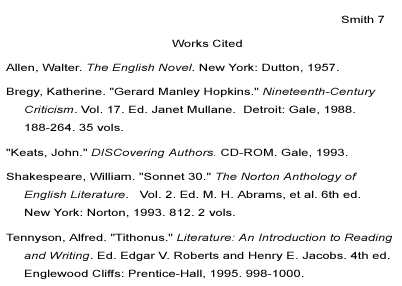
Need more help or information?

Well, you lucky ducks, seeing as it is the 21st century, you have many more avenues for seeking help and guidance than I had. I could only consult the MLA manual while walking to school, uphill, in the snow. In addition to the old-school manual (which you can purchase, check out of the library, or borrow from me), you have:

* Online tools such as NoodleBib which will format the publishing information for you.
* Formatting tools in MS Word which will also do the heavy lifting for you.
* In many online databases, the publishing information is already formatted for you, so you can simply copy the bibliography and paste it in your Works Cited.
* One of the best writing sites on the web is provided by Purdue University. It’s called the OWL (Online Writing Lab) and can walk you through all stages of essay writing, including formatting your essay and Works Cited according to MLA, APA, and Chicago standards. You can visit the OWL at: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Now quit yer bellyachin’ ya whippersnappers!

Sample works cited excerpt



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In-Text Citations

In-text citations in an MLA-formatted paper are very streamlined because so much of the publishing information has already been established in the Works Cited. Do NOT include more information than is specified here! “More is more” would be a very bad approach right about now…

Quotations four lines or fewer in length:

Most of your quotations will be incorporated into the paragraph itself. **The first time you quote a source**, place the author’s name in the appropriate sentence OR parenthetical reference.

*Example 1:*

The company manager “was obeyed, yet he inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect” (Conrad 87).

*Example 2:*

“He was obeyed,” writes Joseph Conrad of the company manager, “yet he inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect” (87).

**[Note the formatting: “Quote” (Author’s last name SPACE page number).]**

For each successive quotation from the same source, just cite the page number. You no longer need to cite the author…

UNLESS…

you cite a new source.

Then, when you go BACK to your initial source, cite the author again.

A sample sequence could go like this:

* First mention of first source (Jones 34)
* Second mention of first source (57)
* First mention of a new source (Campbell 374)
* Revisiting first source (Jones 200)
* Yet another mention of first source (21)

Formatting poetry or verse in three lines or fewer:

For citing short verses, indicate where line breaks occur in the original text by using forward slashes in your essay:

“April is the cruelest month, breeding/ Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing/ memory and desire…”(Eliot 5).

Block quotations

Use block quotations when a passage exceeds four lines (prose) or three lines (verse).

How to:

1. Introduce the quotation with a colon.
2. Begin a new line.
3. Maintain double spacing.
4. Indent all lines of the block an additional ½”
5. Place your parenthetical reference at the end of the last quoted line.

*Example:*

Elizabeth Bishop’s “In the Waiting Room” is rich in evocative detail:

It was winter. It got dark

early. The waiting room

was full of grown-up people,

arctics and overcoats,

lamps and magazines. (6-10)

[Let’s pretend I used double-space there.]

Citing Shakespeare (and all drama, really)

When citing lines from a play, use all Arabic numerals to indicate: Act. Scene. Lines.

*Example (single speaker):*

King Lear rages at the storm, “Blow winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow!/ Your cataracts and hurricanoes, spout/ Till you have drenched our steeples…” (Shakespeare 3.2.1-3).

*Example (dialogue):*

GONERIL. Hear me, my lord.

What need you five-and-twenty, ten or five,

To follow in a house where twice so many

Have a command to tend you?

REGAN. What need one?

LEAR. O, reason not the need! (2.4.254-58)

**[Note the formatting for dialogue: after the speaker’s first line, indent all subsequent lines an additional quarter inch. Include the parenthetical reference as you would in a block quote.]**

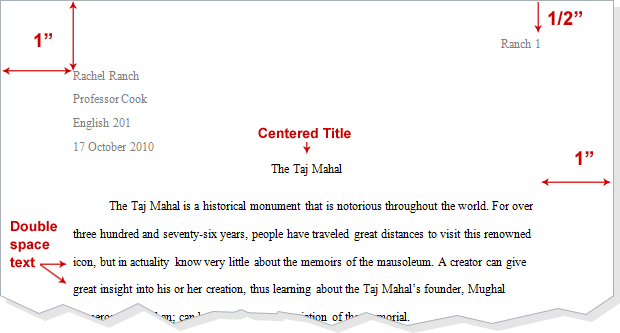
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Formatting your essay

Set these formatting guidelines in place before your begin typing your essay:

1. Line spacing: the entire document should be double-spaced.
2. Font: use 12 point Times New Roman (preferred) or Arial font.
3. Set all page margins to 1”. (Some word processors default to 1 ½” for some odd reason.)
4. Pagination: page numbers should appear in the top right corner.
5. Header: your last name should precede the page number. So the top right corner of the first page of your essay could read “Mitchell 1”.
6. Heading: place each piece of information on a separate line. The sequence goes: your name, teacher’s name, course, date.
7. Title is placed after the heading and should be center-aligned. NO OTHER SPECIAL FORMATTING!

Sample MLA formatting excerpt



Now, that wasn’t so bad, was it? ☺